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## Scripture in the Light of Love

Over my years of knowing God my views have grown from where I began. I suppose that's normal; for all of us to change some of our views as we mature in the Lord, and in His Word. One of the main reasons my ways of thinking have changed, is because I have grown in understanding how much God is a Father of Love! If there is one revelation that I would classify as the most important for a Christian to understand, then it would be for you to know God as your caring Father! It is impossible for Him to act outside of love.

I had always known that He is love, but to be honest, my heart had a hard time accepting the simple principle that God is love. 1 John 4:16, *"And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him."* There are some scriptures, mostly from the Old Testament, which seemed to show me an angry and impatient God, until I accepted that He is only love.

As I began to see this love, I also began to see certain scriptures in a brighter light than I had before. Scripture where I used to interpret anger as His motivation, actually began to show the opposite. Truly the deepest and simplest way to understand scripture is to shine the truth that God is love on the verses in your bible, and it will reveal the accurate interpretation that lies within it. Verses that had painted God as a confusing figure in my mind, began to show His true love towards us as His children.

One set of verses specifically puzzled me about God for most of my Christian walk. In fact, the definition behind them has been so universally accepted into the doctrine of the church, that it has altered the view of God as a Father. I would like to examine these verses under the light of love with you. As we look at these scriptures, please allow me to take the position of opinion, and not doctrine. In other words, I am not going to tell you what these scriptures mean, but simply give you another way to view them, and show that maybe what we have accepted as being truth really is not.

From the beginning of my understanding of who God was, I believed that He created Adam and Eve, and placed them in a beautiful garden called Eden. However, because they were perfect in every way, He needed to place a temptation in the garden, so that their obedience to Him could be tested. The reasoning behind this was, to really show they loved God, they needed to be allowed the opportunity to choose God over sin. Even to be able to prove to themselves that they loved God, they were granted a gift of enticement. Thus, temptation was placed in their midst by the very Father who created them in His image.

The scriptures we are looking at are Genesis 2:8-9, *"The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."*

It has been widely accepted that God made the Tree of Knowledge simply because it says that "God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." However, if you look closely at the words that follow, it can completely change our perception of these verses. It does say He made every tree grow, but then in the next sentence He clearly separates the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge from the other trees.

When the scripture says "also in the midst" it separates these trees from the rest of the trees. It would be like me telling you that I brought the boys to the football game in my van, also John and Steve were in the middle of the field playing. You can interpret that, because I brought the boys with me, then I must have brought John and Steve as well, or you can interpret that John and Steve came separately. In fact some translations use the English word "and" instead of "also" which may help us to see clearer that these trees are different than the others. There is no doubt that they are in the garden but we do note that they are different than the other trees and more importantly, it brings up the possibility that God was not responsible for the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil being there.

I know many theologians make a great argument that the two trees are symbolic of spiritual things and not actual trees at all. However, that is a different discussion and so for our focus we will take it literally, that these two are actual trees with actual fruit, but they have a different purpose than the natural trees. My next question, is if God is not the one responsible for the Tree of Knowledge, then who is?

To understand the possibilities of this, let's look first at God who by definition is good. 1 John 1:5 says, *"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."* And Psalm 92:15, *"To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."*

This is proof that it is impossible for God to have any actions rooted in unrighteousness. If God is only light and love, then where did evil come from? Which brings up logical questions such as, "If there is no evil in God, how could he create evil to tempt Adam and Eve with it?" and "If there is no evil in God, how could He create the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?"

We can find in scripture exactly how evil was conceived, and it wasn't from God, but in the heart of Lucifer. It did not exist in heaven until this perfect beautiful creation of God brought it forth from within his own heart. It tells us the story in Ezekiel 28:13-17.

*"You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you."*

Satan was created perfect and beautiful but it was within his own heart that he birthed evil. This perfect Cherub became the only creature ever to experience both good and evil. Before this moment, there is no record of any being with this knowledge.

We read how Satan was in the garden of Eden, which proves that he illegally invaded earth from heaven, and from John 8:44 we can read how Jesus gives Satan the title of father of lies, murder and evil desires. *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks*

*from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."* Jesus does not call the tree the father of these things, but purely lays the blame at the feet of Satan.

Lucifer is an ancient creature who has been around long before man was ever created, and he is the father of evil. If you traced back every evil act ever done, you could follow them all the way back to him. From the beginning of our universe, he was already here to reproduce his creation of wickedness.

My Pastor, Dave Roberson, once said that, "the greatest price that heaven has ever paid was for God to give us the free will to choose", and we can see this heavy price unfold in front of us as God would not stop Adam from eating of the tree or stop Lucifer from being in the garden. God will not ever infringe on our freedom to make choices, no matter the cost. He is truly faithful to His Word!

God cannot change who He is and that is why we can stand on His Word as it will last for all of eternity as Truth. I want us to see that in heaven there was no tree of temptation for any of His angels or created creatures, to be tested to prove their ability to obey God. In fact, in all of history the first showing of temptation being given was when Lucifer began to convince the angels with great persuasive words that they could overthrow God. Like a dark seed, he planted in those angels, and it began to spread and reproduce throughout one third of the angels.

We also see that in the New Testament, when Jesus was tempted while in the wilderness, it was Satan who tempted Jesus, not God. Even when Peter attempted to talk Jesus out of going to Jerusalem and suffering, Jesus rebuked Satan for that thought. Matthew 16:23, *"But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."* All through scripture we can see the source of all temptation comes from the enemy, so how could we accept that God would be responsible for any such thing?

When God removed everyone from Eden, He was protecting them from the Tree of Life, so that they would not be able to live forever in their new condition. The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is not mentioned as being something God takes ownership of. Genesis 3:22-23, *"Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken."* Adam and Eve had become aware that evil existed and also joined ranks with the enemy by giving themselves the power to choose evil.

God was rescuing them by no longer allowing them to gain from the Tree of Life. In verse 24 it says, *"So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."*

In their new condition of darkness, the Tree of Life would cause harm to them. If God was able to place an angel as powerful as Satan with flaming swords to protect them from His tree, then why would He have placed a tree of temptation which caused irreparable damage in front of them in the first place? Unless, He was not responsible for the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

In the end of days, God creates a New Heaven and New Earth for His children and the Tree of Life is present for us to eat from. Revelations 22:1-2, *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were*

*for the healing of the nations.*" This is the final place for us, and God is fully in charge. Satan and the fallen angels have already been cast into the lake of fire for eternity and are no longer free to tempt man. There is no mention of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil here. There is no evidence of God testing His children in heaven.

God's instructions to Adam were simple, eat of every tree except one. Genesis 2:16-17, *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 'but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'*" Now we know from this one action of sin Adam died spiritually. But with it, he also passed down that death to every person born. We all came from him, and because of his action, he condemned the entire human race, placing us all on a road to hell.

You and I were born with a nature of darkness because of Adam's rebellion. Not to mention how the entirety of God's creation was subject to being twisted and warped into something completely different than what He had originally planned. Every bit of destruction or devastation in human history can be blamed on one act of choosing to eat from that tree. From the Holocaust of the Jews, which killed millions, to the tsunami that killed hundreds of thousands, to every deformed child to every starving person; all brokenness is the fruit of Adam's failure in this temptation.

In God's creation there is no sorrow nor hate, there are no tornadoes or earthquakes, there is no sickness or disease and there is no death. When God is given back the earth, the lion doesn't eat the lamb but it will lie down with it. All of humanity and all of God's creation was twisted to become corrupt in one step of disobedience from Adam. If this was a test from God it was a strong one.

Think of it this way, if I desired to test my eight year old daughter whom I love with all my heart. And to allow her the privilege of showing me her love and loyalty I devised a temptation for her. I first told her to be free to eat of all the good snacks in the kitchen except for one and in the middle of the table I placed a very tasty looking chocolate bar. I again asked her to be obedient to her daddy's wishes and left her alone knowing that another child would soon come into the kitchen and try to convince her that it was okay for her to eat that tasty chocolate bar in the middle of the table.

As my daughter grabs the chocolate there is a string that is tied to it that leads to a switch and when she unwraps the bar to eat it that switch is turned on. Then there is a ten second countdown triggered which counts down from ten...nine...eight...seven...six...and when it says zero an atomic bomb is set off which is so powerful that the whole world is effected with the radiation. The radiation lingers and causes their offspring to become mutated and diseased for generation after generation after generation for millions of years because of just one explosion.

If I told you that I was going to test my daughter so she could see that she loved me with this type of consequence, then you would have me arrested, and yet what happened because of Adam eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was so much worse. Romans 8:20 says, *"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. "*

The entire human race was condemned to hell, and every generation since has been affected by the mutation that sin has brought us, including disease and death. Amen, that Jesus came to deliver us from what happened in that one moment of disobedience! Was this actually a test from God? If it was then it was a big

one.

Looking at the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil through the light of the love of a father has helped me to believe that God does not bring temptation into our lives. There is a line from an old song that the words simply say, "God is good, devil bad". I don't believe that God was responsible for the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. I don't believe the devil has the power to create, but I do see that he has the ability to twist and reshape what has been created. If this was an actual tree with actual fruit, and not symbolic, then perhaps the devil mutated something that was in the garden. But for us to accept that God was responsible for this tree, changes everything we know of Him as a loving Father, and contradicts the image that is shown throughout the rest of scripture.

In the context of these thoughts, please consider the possibility that when God talked to Adam about Eden, what He was saying was. "I created all of these natural trees around you to eat freely from. Also, in the middle of the garden is the Tree of Life, which will grant you life and allow you to live forever. There is also a tree I'm not responsible for, that is not of Me. It's fruit produces death and evil, and if you eat of that tree you will die.".

He is love, and you will only find good in Him and never evil. In every scripture you will find that the only reasons for God's actions are love. The moment after Adam disobeyed and failed, God implemented His plan of redemption for the entire human race. Even in our own failings, we can look to God and not only find love but also a plan of redemption for our mistakes. He loves you and He will never give up on you. He truly is a Father of love!

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